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SUBJECT: BOSNIA - REACTIONS TO ARREST OF ICTY FUGITIVE
RADOVAN KARADZIC

Classified By: Michael J. Murphy for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: The arrest of Radovan Karadzic is a critical milestone in the quest for justice for the victims of war crimes committed in Bosnia. It could also constitute an important step on the road to reconciliation in the country depending, in part, on how the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) handles Karadzic's prosecution. While officially welcomed by all parties in Bosnia, Karadzic's arrest has highlighted persistent ethnic and political fault lines in the country. Republika Srpska (RS) Milorad Dodik stressed that the RS was not a "Karadzic creation" and noted that former Bosniak war time President Alija Izetbegovic should have been tried for his actions during the 1992-1995 war, and implied that Bosniak member of the Tri-Presidency Haris Silajdzic might have been guilty of war crimes as well. Silajdzic said that, though Karadzic had been arrested and Slobodan Milosevic was dead, "their project in BiH continues to live" (a reference to the existence of the RS). Sulejman Tihic, President of the Bosniak Party for Democratic Action (SDA), predicted that information disclosed during Karadzic's trial will enable a reexamination of the legitimacy of the RS. Over the longer-term, justice and reconciliation in Bosnia will require more than the arrest and prosecution of ICTY indictees Karadzic and Mladic. It will require adoption of a comprehensive plan for addressing Bosnia's war crimes legacy, and more importantly, it will require political leaders from all ethnic groups to honestly address the past and to actively help heal the wounds from the war. Unfortunately, political leaders' reactions to Karadzic's arrest suggest that they will continue to pursue the same unconstructive agendas that they have pursued for the last two years. END SUMMARY

Karadzic's Arrest Dominates the News

12. (U) As expected, the July 21 arrest in Belgrade of ICTY fugitive Radovan Karadzic has generated rapid and widespread reactions among Bosnian political leaders and the media. Although the news broke shortly after midnight, media outlets, including those in the Republika Srpska (RS), delayed press deadlines in order to obtain reactions from leading politicians representing all ethnic groups. Immediately after the arrest, Republika Srpska Police Chief Uros Pena released a public statement saying that the RS Police had played no role in the Karadzic arrest. The statement also noted that the RS Ministry of Interior would increase security at key government and cultural facilities as a precautionary measure. (Note: We have not received reports of disturbances related to Karadzic's arrest during

the day (June 22). End Note)

Dodik: Karadzic is Individual, Bosniaks Guilty of Crimes

13. (C) RS Prime Minister Milorad Dodik was restrained in his initial reaction to the arrest, echoing positions consistent with past RS statements on ICTY issues. During a press conference to discuss the Karadzic arrest, Dodik was less restrained. He reiterated RS support for Serbia's actions and prosecution of all ICTY indictees, and congratulated Serbia for advancing the country's EU integration efforts through the arrest. However, Dodik cited Karadzic's detention in Serbia as proof that the RS had been unjustifiably accused of failure to cooperate with the ICTY and had done everything in its power to comply with its ICTY obligations. Dodik said the arrest of ICTY indictees should be treated as a simple legal obligation and cautioned Sarajevo politicians to refrain from "misusing the euphoria" created by the arrest. Dodik cautioned that the ensuing trial should focus on the crimes committed by Karadzic, who bears responsibility for his actions alone, and not be used to try the RS or Bosnian Serbs. He stated that Karadzic did not create the RS, the RS people did, and warned that guilt cannot be collective. Dodik also noted that former Bosniak war time President Alija Izetbegovic should have been tried for his actions during the 1992-1995 war, and asserted that Silajdzic "should answer" for his activities during the war.

SDS and Dodik Exchange Barbs

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14. (SBU) The Karadzic arrest precipitated an exchange of political barbs among Dodik's Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) and the Serb Democratic Party (SDS), Karadzic's party. At the continuation of a regular session of the Republika Srpska National Assembly (RSNA) this morning (June 22), the SDS caucus attempted to add a discussion of Karadzic's arrest to the RSNA agenda, presumably to criticize it and/or to attack ICTY and Bosnian courts for an anti-Serb bias. RSNA Speaker Igor Radojcic, a member of Dodik's SNSD, refused the SDS request for adding the Karadzic arrest to the regular agenda, and instead adjourned the RSNA for summer recess. SDS responded by announcing plans to initiate the procedures for a special session of the RSNA to force the decision to take place. In his press conference, Dodik accused SDS of attempting to "dramatize the situation."

The Bosniaks: Challenging the RS's Legitimacy

15. (SBU) Bosniak political leaders focused on the arrest as an opportunity to reexamine the historical legacy of the war and the structures of post-Dayton Bosnia. Bosniak member of the Tri-Presidency, Haris Siljadzic, stated that, although Karadzic has been arrested and Slobodan Milosevic was dead, "their projects in BiH continue to live." Silajdzic also lectured that "the entire international community has an obligation to erase the consequences of genocide in Bosnia, and not only to arrest Karadzic and Ratko Mladic." Party for Democratic Action (SDA) President Sulejman Tihic predicted that information that will be disclosed in Karadzic's trial will answer questions about the character of the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia, including actions by Karadzic, such as the creation of the RS. He also attacked the RS for failing to arrest anyone for the genocide in Srebrenica, and warned that the RS could not "subsist" because it was Karadzic's and Mladic's creation. Reis Ceric, the head of Bosnia's Islamic community, stated that Karadzic's arrest represented the victory of truth, justice, and peace in Bosnia, but expressed sadness that Ratko Mladic remains at large.

Comment: What Does it Mean for Bosnia

¶16. (C) The arrest of Radovan Karadzic is a critical milestone in the quest for justice for the victims of war crimes committed in Bosnia. It could also constitute an important step on the road to reconciliation in the country. Bosniaks will scrutinize ICTY's handling of the Karadzic case through the lens of the failed Milosevic prosecution. Another ICTY failure to convict - in a timely fashion - one of the key architects of the genocide and ethnic cleansing that took place here would profoundly upset Bosniaks and complicate our efforts to focus them and their political leadership on the future. Karadzic's trial should also expose the Serbs to some uncomfortable truths about the RS's past, and honestly addressing that past is something the RS leadership must do in order to help heal the country's wounds. Much more is required for justice and reconciliation in Bosnia than Karadzic's arrest, however.

¶17. (C) To begin with, Bosniaks will - justifiably - continue to demand the arrest and prosecution of ICTY indictee Ratko Mladic. The country must also adopt and implement a strategy for effectively addressing those aspects of the country's war crimes legacy that ICTY will not address. This is why the National War Crimes Strategy that is currently being drafted is so important. The country's political leaders also have a responsibility to support the institutions, which will be charged with its implementation. Finally, political leaders will have to constructively address the past and to focus their energies on building the peaceful and prosperous future that is essential to lasting reconciliation in Bosnia. This will require a sea change in Bosnian politics, something that Silajdzic's comment -- Karadzic's project is alive and well -- and Dodik's suggestion that Silajdzic must be held accountable for his war time actions, makes clear is exceedingly unlikely.
ENGLISH